NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

REVISED FY 2000 AND FY 2001 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PLANS

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was established pursuant to Public Law 103-354, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) Reorganization Act of 1994, (7 U.S.C. 6962). The mission of NRCS is to provide national leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, improve, and sustain the Nation's natural resources and environment.

Table 1 lists the Agency's strategic goals and objectives as presented in our strategic plan for fiscal years 1997-2002, and Table 2 through 5 show the annual performance measures that we will use to measure performance for the objectives. The outcomes of achieving these strategic goals and objectives will be:

- Sustainable, productive, and prosperous farms, ranches, and communities.
- Healthy people.
- A healthy natural environment.

In support of its mission, NRCS employees provide services through the following programs:

Conservation Operations
The four programs in the Conservation Operations account are the basic activities that support all NRCS programs and activities. **Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)** provides the infrastructure through which NRCS is able to respond the multitude of conservation needs across the Nation. Through CTA, NRCS provides assistance to conservation districts, develops technical standards and technical guides, conducts natural resources inventories, and provides assistance to individuals to plan and manage natural resources. This basic assistance includes assessing natural resource conditions and issues and explaining the USDA programs that are available to address them. This assistance helps land users to assess conservation needs, consider alternative courses of action, set goals, and develop conservation plans. CTA also provides assistance in implementing these plans and follow-up assistance to maintain the conservation system and revise it when the operator's situation changes. As a reimbursable activity under CTA, NRCS provides technical assistance to resource managers participating in programs administered by the Farm Service Agency. The **Soil Survey** and the **Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting** programs develop and disseminate basic information on soil resources and seasonal water supplies and provide recommendations for managing these resources. The **Plant Materials** program develops conservation systems using plant materials.

Water Resources Programs
NRCS programs that focus on water resources include **Watershed Surveys and Planning, Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations,** and **Emergency Watershed Protection.** Water resources activities focus on restoring the health of watersheds through a comprehensive planning approach. These programs assist communities to protect watersheds from damage caused by erosion, floodwater, and sediment, and to conserve and develop water and land resources. Resource concerns addressed include water quality, opportunities for water conservation, wetlands and water storage capacity, agricultural drought problems, rural development, municipal and industrial water needs, upstream flood damages, and water needs for fish, wildlife, and forest-based industries. Planning involves assisting local sponsoring organizations to develop plans for small watersheds (not larger than 250,000 acres). Surveys include river basin studies and floodplain management studies. Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations provides technical and financial assistance to local sponsors to install watershed improvement measures. Measures may include land treatment, structural, and non-structural measures. Emergency Watershed Protection provides immediate assistance to reduce threats to life and property in watersheds damaged by severe natural events such as floods, hurricanes, or droughts, and to restore damaged sites to pre-disaster conditions.

Resource Conservation and Development Program
The Resource Conservation and Development Program provides technical assistance to improve the capability of state and local units of government and local nonprofit organizations to plan, develop, and carry out programs for resource conservation and development.

Financial Assistance Programs (Farm Bill Programs)
Since passage of the 1996 Act, the Secretary of Agriculture has assigned to NRCS responsibility for administering a number of programs that provide financial as well as technical assistance. These include three programs that are primarily single purpose: **Wetlands Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program,** and **Farmland Protection Program**. The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program** is administered by NRCS, with concurrence from the Farm Service Agency (FSA). It provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to address priority natural resource concerns identified at the local level. NRCS helps participants plan and apply conservation on the land. FSA makes payments to program participants and is responsible for financial reporting.

Conservation Security Program (CSP).
The President's budget for FY 2001 proposes this new conservation program as a key component of the Administration's Farm Safety Net proposal. The purpose of the program is to strengthen farm family income while promoting environmentally sound natural resource management. The program will provide annual payments to farmers and ranchers who voluntarily implement and maintain various conservation treatments. Payment levels would be based on the range and comprehensiveness of the treatments implemented.

Interagency Cooperation
NRCS is USDA's lead agency for assisting owners and managers of non-federal lands to protect and manage soil, water, and related resources well. In addition to administering its own programs, NRCS provides assistance to other USDA agencies who need access to NRCS's technical expertise, resources information, or delivery system in order to deliver their own programs effectively. NRCS works with the Farm Service Agency, providing technical determinations and recommendations needed by FSA to administer the conservation compliance requirements of its programs and to administer the Conservation Reserve Program and Emergency Conservation Program. In turn, NRCS relies on FSA to establish and implement administrative processes for contracts, payment, and financial reporting for the Farm Bill financial assistance programs administered by NRCS.

Relation of Program Activities to Agency Performance Goals
The performance measures described in the agency performance plan are used to set consolidated goals for activities funded by all agency programs. These consolidated measures and goals support the multi-year performance goals for natural resources in the strategic plan, which establish acre targets for specific changes in resource condition. Baselines for the strategic goals were established by the 1992 National Resources Inventory (NRI) conducted by NRCS. The 1997 NRI will provide an updated baseline and an indication of progress toward the 2002 goals. Data from the 1997 NRI will be available for analysis in late calendar year 1999.

The annual performance goals for these multi-year goals rely on measures of “conservation on the land” achieved with direct technical assistance from NRCS and our partners at the field level. On October 1, 1998, NRCS implemented a new performance reporting system to ensure that complete and reliable data on performance are collected with a minimum reporting burden on the field staff. (See page 25 for a description of the new system.)

The annual indicators for FY 2001 consist of key systems and practices for which NRCS has developed standards and specifications that are documented in local field office technical guides. Target levels of performance for these indicators were set on the basis of expert judgment and the data currently available. Reliable baselines for some will not be available until the end of FY 1999. Goals will be adjusted as reliable baselines are established.

These indicators capture only the conservation applied with direct assistance by NRCS employees. In addition, other resource managers adopt conservation management as a result of NRCS information delivered through other channels.

The annual measures will not report the condition of the resource base as a whole in relation to the target condition set in the strategic plan. Periodic inventories, which collect data on a sample that represents the whole landscape, are necessary to determine whether the level of activity was adequate to reach the goal.

The annual performance report will include data or projections of the impacts of accomplishing the natural resources performance goals. Impacts may include improvements in landscape health and social and economic impacts.

Additional performance information will continue to be collected to document performance on program-specific activities.

Table 1. - NRCS Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Management Initiatives

Goal 1: A healthy and productive land that sustains food and fiber production, sustains functioning watersheds and natural systems, enhances the environment, and improves urban and rural landscapes.

Objectives:
- 1.1. Healthy and productive cropland sustaining U.S. agriculture and the environment.
- 1.2. Healthy and productive grazing land sustaining U.S. agriculture and the environment.
- 1.3. Healthy watersheds providing clean and abundant water supplies for people and the environment.
- 1.4. Healthy and productive wetlands sustaining watersheds and wildlife.
- 1.5. High quality habitat on private land supporting the Nation's wildlife heritage.

Goal 2: Individuals and their neighbors working together as effective and willing stewards of the natural resources on their property and in their communities.

Objective:
- 2.1. A strong and effective grassroots conservation partnership across the United States and its territories, commonwealths, and affiliated governments.

Management Initiative 1: Provide high quality customer service.

Management Initiative 2: Improve quality and usefulness of NRCS information.

Table 2. - NRCS Objectives, Multi-year Performance Targets and Annual Performance Indicators for General Goal 1 - A Healthy and Productive Land

Objective	Multi-Year Performance Targets	Annual Performance Indicators
Healthy and Productive Cropland	By 2002, the acreage of non highly erodible cropland eroding above T will be cut by one-third from 1992 levels.	Cropland protected against excessive erosion, acres (reduced from >2T to $\leq$ T [1])
	By 2002, the acreage of highly erodible cropland eroding above 2T will be cut by one-third from 1992 levels.	Cropland protected against excessive erosion, acres (reduced from >2T to $\leq$ T [1])
	By 2002, 50 percent of cropland will be managed with conservation systems that enhance soil quality.	Resource management systems completed on cropland, acres
Healthy and Productive Grazing land	By 2002, 45 percent of non-Federal rangeland will have no serious ecological or management problems.	Resource management systems installed on grazing land, acres
	By 2002, 60 percent of permanent pastureland will have no serious ecological or management problems.	Resource management systems installed on grazing land, acres
	By 2002, 65 percent of rangeland acreage with streams will have no serious streambank erosion taking place.	Resource management systems installed on grazing land, acres
Healthy Watersheds	By 2002, NRCS and our partners will be completing 100 priority watershed projects each year that meet the goals set by local communities for water supply, water quality, or flood protection.	Nutrient management systems applied, acres Animal waste management systems installed, number Irrigation water management, reduction in water applied, acre-inches Annual flood prevention benefits, dollars
	By 2002, we will have helped landowners and communities establish 2 million miles of buffer strips to protect watersheds and water supplies.	Conservation buffers for water quality and wildlife, miles
Healthy and Productive Wetlands	By 2000, there will be a net increase in wetland functions on agricultural land.	Wetland creation or restoration applied, acres Wildlife wetland habitat management applied, acres
High Quality Habitat for Wildlife	By 2002, 20 million acres of cropland or pastureland in the Midwest and Great Plains will be converted to native grassland vegetation.	(To be established)
	By 2002, riparian habitat along 600 miles of rivers, streams, lakes, or wetlands will be restored.	(Practices included in the buffer measure are indicators of work on riparian restoration)

[1] Annual goals for operational units were set for a single measure that includes both HEL and NHEL. Data are being collected in a form that permits determination of progress toward each long-term goal.

Note: The table lists only measures that directly link to specific multi-year performance targets in the strategic plan. This performance plan includes additional measures.

Table 3. - NRCS Objectives, Multi-year Performance Targets and Annual Performance Indicators for General Goal 2 - Effective Stewards

Objective	Multi-Year Performance Targets	Annual Performance Indicators
Strong Grassroots Partnership	(Multi-year performance targets in the current strategic plan are internal process targets rather than outcome-related targets.)	Locally led plans developed, number

Table 4. - NRCS Objectives, Multi-year Performance Targets and Annual Performance Indicators for Management Initiative 1 - Customer Service

Satisfied Customers	By 2000, 90 percent of all NRCS customers will be satisfied or highly satisfied with NRCS products and services.	Customers satisfied or highly satisfied with NRCS products and services, percent
	By 1999, we will double the number of under-served or minority customers receiving conservation assistance from 1992 levels.	Total number of minority clients receiving assistance
		Number of tribes assisted

Table 5. - NRCS Objectives, Multi-year Performance Targets and Annual Performance Indicators for Management Initiative 2 - Information Quality

Science-based Information and Technologies	By 2002, geospatial interpretations of soil survey information for all non-Federal land in the United States and its territories, commonwealths, and affiliated governments will be easily accessible to our customers, partners, and the general public.	Non-Federal land with soil survey available in digital form, number of surveys
	By 2000, resource assessment tools and data collection systems will be in place to monitor and assess changes in soil quality, grazing land health, wetland functions, and watershed health.	(Progress is reported in the “Means and Strategies” section of the performance plan.)

Note: The tables list only measures that directly link to specific multi-year performance targets in the strategic plan. This performance plan includes additional measures.

Table 6. - Relation of Program Activities to Strategic Objectives, Goal 1 - Healthy and Productive Land

Programs	Strategic Objectives: Healthy and Productive ---				
	Cropland	Grazing land	Watersheds	Wetlands	Wildlife Habitat
NRCS Programs:					
Conservation Technical Assistance	X	X	X	X	X
Soil Survey	X	X	X	X	X
Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting	X	X	X	X	X
Plant Materials	X	X	X	X	X
Watershed Surveys and Planning	X	X	X	X	X
Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations	X	X	X	X	X
Emergency Watershed Protection Program			X		
Resources Conservation and Development	X	X	X	X	X
Forestry Incentives Program			X		X
Wetlands Reserve Program			X	X	X
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	X	X	X	X	X
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program					X
Farmland Protection Program					
Conservation Security Program	X	X	X	X	X
Rural Abandoned Mine Program			X		
Farm Service Agency Programs Implemented with NRCS Assistance:					
Conservation Reserve Program	X		X	X	X
Agricultural Market Transition Act contracts (conservation compliance)	X			X	
Emergency Conservation Program			X		

Table 7. - Relation of Program Activities to Goal 2, Effective Stewards, and to Management Initiatives 1 and 2

Programs	Goal 2 Objective: Strong grassroots partnership	Management Initiative 1: Customer service	Management Initiative 2: Information quality
NRCS Programs:			
Conservation Technical Assistance	X	X	X
Soil Survey	X	X	X
Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting	X	X	X
Plant Materials	X	X	X
Watershed Surveys and Planning	X	X	X
Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations	X	X	
Emergency Watershed Protection Program		X	
Resources Conservation and Development	X	X	X
Forestry Incentives Program		X	
Wetlands Reserve Program	X	X	
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	X	X	
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program		X	
Farmland Protection Program	X	X	
Conservation Security Program		X	
Rural Abandoned Mine Program		X	
Farm Service Agency Programs Implemented with NRCS Assistance:			
Conservation Reserve Program	[1]	X	
Agricultural Market Transition Act contracts (conservation compliance)		X	
Emergency Conservation Program		X	

An “X” in the column for Goal 2 indicates that strengthening local capability is a stated goal of the program or that participation by partners is a requirement for NRCS action.

An “X” in the column for Management Initiative 2 indicates that program funds support resource inventory and assessment or technology development activities.

[1] The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program does include a partnership component although the CRP does not.

Goal 1: A healthy and productive land that sustains food and fiber production, sustains functioning watersheds and natural systems, enhances the environment, and improves urban and rural landscapes.

Objectives: 1.1 Healthy and productive cropland sustaining U.S. agriculture and the environment.
1.2 Healthy and productive grazing land sustaining U.S. agriculture and the environment.

Program Activities: See Table 6 on page 6 and Table 10 on page 30.

			FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Estimate	FY 2001 Estimate
Cropland	Funding (Discretionary)	($ in 1000s)	277,583	309,558	286,324
	Funding (Mandatory)	($ in 1000s)	102,435	67,800	93,850
	Total Funding	($ in 1000s)	380,018	377,358	380,174
	FTEs (Discretionary)		3,396	3,428	3,224
	FTEs (Mandatory)		1,497	748	1,086
	Total FTEs		4,892	4,176	4,310

Grazing land	Funding (Discretionary)	($ in 1000s)	111,825	90,805	87,014
	Funding (Mandatory)	($ in 1000s)	43,500	43,500	51,750
	Total Funding	($ in 1000s)	155,325	134,305	138,764
	FTEs (Discretionary)		1,391	1,016	977
	FTEs (Mandatory)		162	151	171
	Total FTEs		1,554	1,167	1,148

Conservation systems and practices produce multiple benefits; activities taken to address one resource concern affect others as well. Funds and FTEs have been estimated based on the primary purpose of an activity. No attempt has been made to allocate costs to account for the multiple benefits they produce. Therefore, estimates do not show the full costs of achieving an objective.

FTEs include technology, inventory, and support time at all levels as well as field staff time.

"Mandatory" includes program activities reimbursed with Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funds. "Discretionary" includes appropriated funds and reimbursables other than CCC.

Estimates of funds to be expended on the resource objectives are based on available data from several sources, including a pilot state performance planning exercise and the second national workload analysis. Estimates for FY 1999 and FY 2000 based on this methodology differ from estimates in the initial performance plans for those years. Methodology will be further refined in late FY 2000.

PERFORMANCE GOALS AND INDICATORS	FY 1999 Actual[1]	FY 2000 Target	FY 2001 Target
Assist producers to plan and apply systems to protect and enhance cropland and grazing lands			
Resource management systems applied on cropland, 1000s of acres	8,680	6,000	6,200
Cropland protected against excessive erosion, 1000s of acres	5,320	4,000	4,200
Resource management systems applied on grazing land, 1000s of acres	7,900	5,800	6,000
Prescribed grazing applied, 1000s of acres	10,200	10,000	10,000

[1] The data for these goals were collected through the agency's new Performance and Results Measurement System (PRMS). This web-based reporting system was implemented on Oct. 1, 1998, at 287 sample counties, statistically selected to represent NRCS's national performance. Performance reported here is based on a statistical expansion of the data from the sample. Data from independent sources, e.g. Census of Agriculture, was used to develop expansion factors. Because some sample offices experienced telecommunications problems during the transition period, the estimate may actually under-represent performance in some areas, although quantifying this potential gap is not possible at this time.

Discussion of Performance Goals: The achievement of these performance goals supports achievement of USDA's Goal 3.1 - Promote sustainable production of food and fiber products while maintaining a quality environment and strong natural resource base. These indicators reflect land protected and enhanced with NRCS assistance in this fiscal year. Although systems and practices remain on the land for many years, we do not report cumulative accomplishments for most indicators.

Sustainable management. The performance indicators for *resource management systems completed* are the best annual measure of progress toward the goal of sustainable management of agricultural land. The indicator does not, however, include all land on which NRCS provided assistance during the fiscal year. The indicator does not include land where assistance was provided, but additional practices are needed to reach the sustainable level. Although a complete resource management system provides the best protection and helps prevent new problems from arising, application of even a single measure may significantly improve conditions.

For this indicator, the funding available in a given year is not the only variable affecting the performance that is reported for that year. A system "applied" is the result of planning and application that were carried out in the 3 to 5 years preceding the year of completion.

Erosion reduction. The performance indicator for erosion reduction supports the strategic plan's targets for highly erodible and non-highly erodible cropland. The strategic plan sets separate goals for highly erodible land (HEL) and non-highly erodible land (NHEL). The HEL-NHEL distinction is important to participants in FSA programs with conservation compliance requirements, but it is not essential in setting annual goals that apply to all NRCS programs. *Cropland protected against excessive erosion* means that the producer has reduced sheet and rill and/or wind erosion from greater than twice the tolerable soil loss level (2T) to no more than the tolerable soil loss level (T) by applying conservation systems, converting the field to less intensive use, or enrolling it in a land retirement program.

External factors. Weather can have a significant effect on achieving goals for improving grazing land health. Drought can slow the response of rangeland ecosystems to improved management and can force producers to postpone implementation of some practices. The agency cannot affect the unfavorable weather but will revise goals and redirect effort to activities that help resource users mitigate the effects of the weather. For example, in an area where severe drought forced a delay in applying systems on rangeland, there would likely be an increased need for emergency tillage to reduce wind erosion damage on cropland as a result of the dry conditions. The new reporting system, which gives managers the capability for real-time monitoring of progress, will enable managers to track the impacts of external factors and make management adjustments throughout the year.

Means and Strategies: The following paragraphs briefly describe the general process through which NRCS delivers assistance to farmers, ranchers, and other natural resources users. The means and strategies that support all NRCS program activities and goals are described on page 22.

Program delivery strategy. NRCS technical staff assist private landowners and units of government to plan and apply conservation practices in accordance with NRCS standards. Technical staff help producers develop conservation plans that contain an interrelated package or system of practices to achieve the greatest environmental benefit per dollar of cost. This staff also assists in the design, layout, and construction inspection of practices to ensure they comply with standards. These basic services and the

resources information and technical standards to support them are largely provided through Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA).

Both public and private funds may be used to pay for implementation of conservation systems. Many systems are paid for by the landowners themselves, without public cost share assistance. Federal programs that provide financial assistance for application of conservation include the Conservation Reserve Program, administered by FSA with technical assistance provided by NRCS, and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), administered by NRCS with administrative support by FSA. Many State governments have established cost share programs to address concerns within the state. Some municipalities are also using their funds for this purpose.

Resources required. Resources required in FY 2001 include increases in CTA and EQIP funds to provide technical and financial assistance to landusers. Resources also include the Conservation Security Program, a major initiative that, as part of the farm safety net, will provide assistance to farmers and ranchers who practice environmentally sound land management.

Verification and Validation: Procedures relating to verification and validation of reported data for all measures are described on page 25.

Some inconsistencies in data relating to resource management systems are considered possible in the transition period to the new accountability system. In the years 1985-1995, agency attention was concentrated on implementing the conservation provisions of the Farm Bill, which focused on cropland erosion. Many newer employees, therefore, have rather limited experience in planning systems to the resource management level. To address this potential problem, NRCS has recently clarified policy on the resource management level. The agency also conducted an internal evaluation of the conservation planning function to identify management actions needed. Data relating to systems at the resource management level will be analyzed carefully, with extensive comparison of reported data from areas with similar resource conditions and program activities to identify any significant inconsistencies. Performance data will also be compared with workload projections to see if problems are occurring.

Goal 1: A healthy and productive land that sustains food and fiber production, sustains functioning watersheds and natural systems, enhances the environment, and improves urban and rural landscapes.

Objectives: 1.3 Healthy watersheds providing clean and abundant water supplies for people and the environment.
1.4 Healthy and productive wetlands sustaining watersheds and wildlife.
1.5 High quality habitat on private land supporting the Nation's wildlife heritage.

Program Activities: See Table 6 on page 6 and Table 10 on page 30.

			FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Estimate	FY 2001 Estimate
Watersheds	Funding (Discretionary)	($ in 1000s)	333,474	439,728	359,493
	Funding (Mandatory)	($ in 1000s)	87,000	87,000	211,000
	Total Funding	($ in 1000s)	420,474	526,728	570,493
	FTEs (Discretionary)		2,695	2,778	2,899
	FTEs (Mandatory)		325	302	699
	Total FTEs		3,020	3,080	3,598

Wetlands	Funding (Discretionary)	($ in 1000s)	27,069	33,172	31,012
	Funding (Mandatory)	($ in 1000s)	125,204	168,354	296,350
	Total Funding	($ in 1000s)	152,273	201,526	327,362
	FTEs (Discretionary)		339	365	345
	FTEs (Mandatory)		262	275	409
	Total FTEs		601	641	754

Wildlife Habitat	Funding (Discretionary)	($ in 1000s)	26,772	43,964	40,709
	Funding (Mandatory)	($ in 1000s)	20,000	0	60,500
	Total Funding	($ in 1000s)	46,772	39,964	101,209
	FTEs (Discretionary)		337	457	458
	FTEs (Mandatory)		65	0	146
	Total FTEs		402	457	604

See notes following tables for cropland and grazing lands on page 8.

PERFORMANCE GOALS AND INDICATORS	**FY 1999 Actual**	**FY 2000 Target**	**FY 2001 Target**
Assist producers to plan and apply systems to protect water quality against agricultural nonpoint sources of pollution			
Nutrient management systems applied, 1000s of acres	2,700	2,900	4,000
Waste management systems assisted, number	6,170*	9,300	10,500
Conservation buffers for water quality and wildlife, miles, cumulative	720,103	940,000	1,380,000
Pest management systems installed, 1000s of acres	---	---	3,400
Assist local sponsors to plan and apply systems to protect watersheds against flood damages			
Annual flood prevention benefits, 1000s of dollars	914,000	914,000	914,000
Assist producers to plan, apply, and improve systems to manage irrigation water			
Irrigation water management, reduction in water applied, 1000s of acre-inches	7,500	7,200	7,200
Assist resource managers to plan and apply systems to protect or enhance wetlands and wildlife habitat			
Wetland creation or restoration applied, 1000s of acres	270	200	230
Wildlife (wetland and upland) habitat management applied, 1000s of acres	6,300	3,800	4,000

See notes at top of page 9.
* FY 99 value includes only application assistance.

Discussion of Performance Goals: The achievement of these performance goals will support the achievement of USDA's Strategic Goal 3: Promote sensible management of our natural resources. The extent of conservation systems applied is used as an indicator of improved water quality because the changes in water quality resulting from the improved management may not be apparent for several years.

The goal for *waste management systems* for FY 2000 has been revised to reflect the final appropriation and new data on the workload involved. The goals for FY 2000 and FY 2001 include the contributions of other members of the conservation partnership at the field level working with NRCS. NRCS funds are estimated to support about two-thirds of the partnership's total work on waste management. The goals reflect all systems

on which assistance is provided and include both systems planned and systems applied. They include only instances that fully meet the standards for complete systems. The goal for FY 2000 in the initial plan for the fiscal year represented the number of systems or system components on which assistance would be provided in FY 2000. The goal for FY 2000 is based on the amount of technical assistance funds to be directed to the goal. Because waste management systems are extensive to install, success in meeting the goal is highly dependent on the agricultural economy and the availability of financial assistance. Analysis is continuing on issues related to both the FY 2000 and FY 2001 goals; adjustments may be necessary when the analyses are complete.

Conservation buffers are areas or strips of land established and maintained in permanent vegetation along streams and other bodies of water, field edges, headlands, end rows, or across critical long slopes to intercept runoff and pollutants. Buffers are an essential element in the strategy to achieve the erosion control and watershed health objectives. Riparian forest buffers and filter strips also help to achieve the agency's strategic objective for riparian wildlife habitat. The initial performance plans for FY 1999 and FY 2000 set goals for buffers on the basis of acres in buffer practices projected for the continuous sign-up of the Conservation Reserve Program, because other data were not available. In reporting progress toward the 2002 goal of the Secretary's Buffer Initiative, the Initiative now considers all USDA activities and counts buffer lands in USDA land retirement programs when they are enrolled rather than when the cover is established.

Annual flood prevention benefits shown are average annual reduction in flood damages on cropland and pastureland and other agricultural benefits and reduction of damages to homes, businesses, utilities, roads and bridges resulting in a given year from all completed watershed protection projects that have been installed with Watershed Protection Program funds during or prior to that year. The indicator includes both the reduction in flood-related damages and the increased benefits that occur on land protected from flooding. The indicator reports the benefits of the program to date, not just the benefits of the funds expended in the fiscal year.

Improving *irrigation water management* can help to minimize soil erosion and loss of plan nutrients and to protect water quality. The initial FY 2000 goal was based on preliminary data and has been adjusted on the basis of the first year of data in the new performance reporting system. The current goal for FY2000 is lower than the goal in the initial FY 2000 performance plan, which was based on older data.

Wetlands protection. The wetland performance indicators are conservation practices applied to meet criteria in local field office technical guides. The acres of "wetland creation or restoration applied" reported by NRCS may not be the same acres reported as "wetland restored" in the same fiscal year under FSA's Conservation Reserve Program or as the acres for which easements are recorded in that year under the Wetlands Reserve Program. This performance indicator reports acres as created, restored, or enhanced only when a practice has been applied to NRCS technical standards. Program performance measures (both CRP and WRP) that report acres when the contract is signed or the easement is recorded represent an earlier point in time than this indicator because, in most cases, needed practices are not installed until the year after the program documents are signed. The indicator is an annual measure that includes only those acres on which the practice was completed in that fiscal year; it cannot be compared to measures of cumulative acreage enrolled in the CRP or WRP. It includes wetlands created, restored, or enhanced under all programs, including but not limited to WRP and CRP. The measure includes only the wetland acres treated. It does not include associated upland acres that may have been treated or placed under easement to protect the wetland itself.

External factors. The agricultural economy has the potential to affect achievement of goals for protecting water quality, especially goals related to animal waste management. Waste management structures are expensive; producers are less able to make the necessary investment when the agricultural economy is weak. Other conservation practices also require significant investment; those that remove land from crop production reduce the farmer's income. Financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and technical assistance to help identify the most cost effective solution are primary means for mitigating the costs and income loss. In addition, NRCS depends heavily on partnerships in achieving watershed health goals. If economic conditions for livestock producers do not improve, the number of waste

management systems that are producers are able to apply may be seriously limited, and the planning component alone may not be sufficient to reach our performance goal for those systems.

Means and Strategies: The following paragraphs briefly describe the general process through which NRCS delivers assistance to protect watersheds and natural systems. New initiatives or acceleration of current efforts and the additional resources required to implement them are also described briefly. The means and strategies that support all NRCS program activities and goals are described on page 22.

Program delivery strategy. The Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program provides basic assistance to help communities identify resources problems and set goals and to help individual resource managers assess their resources and plan systems for addressing problems. The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations program provides for the full range of conservation practices for total watershed treatment in addition to flood protection. The Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) provides incentives to restore and maintain valuable wetlands. EQIP provides Federal funds to high priority geographic areas identified by state conservationists in consultation with state technical committees through a locally led process. The Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) provides for the acquisition of flood plain easements having both wetland and buffer benefits. NRCS also provides technical assistance to landowners enrolling buffers, wetlands, and wildlife habitat in the FSA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). State governments concerned about the impact of agriculture on water quality have initiated their own programs, as have some municipal governments. Private sources of funds include those provided by the landowners themselves and by private conservation groups such as Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, and American Farmland Trust.

The Administration's strategy for improving water quality is presented in the Clean Water Action Plan announced on February 19, 1998. USDA and the Environmental Protection Agency jointly developed a unified national strategy to minimize impacts of animal feeding operations on the environment and public health. The Animal Feeding Operation Strategy was released on March 9, 1999.

New strategies and resources needed. In FY 2000 and FY 2001, resources required for NRCS to provide assistance to operators who want to reduce the risk of offsite impacts of their operations include an increase in Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) funds directed to animal feeding operations (AFO). In FY 2000, NRCS will redirect $11,000,000 in existing CTA funds from other resource concerns to address AFO concerns and also direct an additional $7,870,000 million in CTA funds to AFO concerns. These resources will support the Clean Water Action Plan for environmental monitoring and the workload related to assistance to animal feeding operations. In FY 2001, resources required include an increase of $20,000,000 and 175 staff years in CTA. The additional technical assistance staff will enable NRCS to: (1) develop technical standards for producers and the industry to minimize the impacts of animal feeding operations on the environment and public health and (2) provide assistance directly to producers to develop comprehensive nutrient management plans and to implement the plans. The increase will provide funding for the first year of a new 10-year initiative that USDA is proposing. In FY 2001, NRCS will provide assistance in developing comprehensive nutrient management plans to 10,500 animal feeding operations. The increased CTA funding in FY 2001 includes $12,000,000 for start-up expenses for the new initiative, including developing new information, training employees and others, and conducting an outreach, information, and education program. In addition, NRCS will designate $178,500,000 in EQIP funds for AFO-related activities in FY 2001.

The strategy for implementing the President's Clean Water Action Plan in FY 2001 also includes an increase of $3,000,000 in CTA funds to support additional environmental monitoring and research. These activities will provide the process begun with the Unified Watershed Assessments of 1998 with additional data to establish baselines and evaluate program outcomes. The strategy also includes a $10,000,000 increase in CTA funds for competitive partnership grants (described more fully under Goal 2).

Resources directed to the healthy watersheds goal in FY 2001 include a decrease of $8,220,000 for Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations, consisting of a reduction of $4,600,000 in financial assistance and $3,620,000 in technical assistance. The funding level will reduce the number of construction/ installation elements to be supported in FY 2001 to about 15 percent below the number funded in FY 2000.

Dam safety is an important part of the strategy to achieve the healthy watershed objective. NRCS is encouraging watershed sponsors to evaluate the condition of aging infrastructure installed under P.L.-534 and P.L.-566. NRCS has helped local sponsors install more than 10,400 dams and thousands of individual conservation practices since 1944. Many of these watershed protection structures are nearing the end of their life span and are in need of rehabilitation beyond the routine operation and maintenance now conducted by the sponsors. In addition, conditions surrounding some structures have changed due to increases in populations, residential construction below the structures, changes in upstream land use, and changes in Federal and state dam safety regulations. By FY 2000, approximately 1,200 aging structures will require significant work to address major public health, safety, and environmental risks. In FY 2001, NRCS will redirect $ 2,000,000 in Watershed and Food Prevention Program funds away from assisting local sponsors to undertake new projects and will use the funds to initiate a new loan authority to assist state and local governments in the rehabilitation of aging P.L. 534 or P.L. 566 structures. Technical assistance related to these structures will be provided to state and local governments on a reimbursable basis. Of these funds, $1,200,000 will be transferred to the Rural Development mission area for the servicing of the loans.

Federal activities to address dam safety are coordinated through two interagency groups. The National Dam Safety Program Act of 1996 codified USDA membership on these groups. NRCS represents USDA on the Interagency Committee on Dam Safety (ICODS), which provides coordination and information exchange among Federal dam agencies and State dam safety agencies. ICODS members are USDA, DOD, DOE, FEMA, FERC, IBWC, NRC, TVA, MSDA. ICODS will advise the Director of FEMA on disbursement of $1,000,000 of research funds and $500,000 of training funds in FY 2001. NRCS also represents USDA on the National Dam Safety Review Board (NDSRB), which serves as a Federal/State advisory board on National dam safety issues. NDSRB members are USDA, DOD, DOI, FERC, FEMA, five State dam safety agency representatives, and one U.S. Committee on Large Dams (USCOLD) representative. NDSRB will advise the Director of FEMA on the disbursement of $4,000,000 in State grant funds in FY 2001.

The strategy for enhancing wildlife habitat in GY 2001 includes amending the 1996 Farm Bill to allow continued funding for the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and to provide the Secretary discretionary authority to determine the appropriate level of funding for technical, financial, and educational activities. Required resources include funding the program at a level of $50,000,000. These funds will be used for financial assistance and to support 165 staff years of technical assistance. The resources will enable NRCS to enroll an additional 1,300,400 acres of wildlife habitat in the program

Efforts to enhance wildlife habitat in FY 2001 will include an additional emphasis on critical salmon habitat in the Pacific Northwest. About 65 percent of the spawning and rearing habitat for salmon habitat species listed under the Endangered Species Act is on private or tribal lands. These land users need technical and financial assistance to adopt habitat enhancement practices. In FY 2001, NRCS will designate $10,500,000 in EQIP funds for the recovery of salmon habitat in the Northwest.

The strategy for achieving the President's goal of increased wetlands functions and values includes increased efforts to place valuable wetlands under long-term or permanent easements. The acreage that can be enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program is capped at 975,000 acres. That limit will be reached during FY 2000. NRCS is proposing that program authority be extended to permit enrollment of up to 250,000 acres each year beginning in FY 2001. NRCS anticipates recording easements on 30 percent of the newly enrolled acres in FY 2001, 50 percent in FY 2002, and 20 percent in FY 2003. Treatment to restore the land under easement would generally be completed and reported in the year after the easement is recorded.

The Emergency Watersheds Protection Program assists in the removal of threats to life and property that remain in the Nation's watersheds in the aftermath of natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and wildfires. Activities vary from year to year, depending on the number, extent, and types of natural disasters that occur. All EWP work is carried out with emergency supplementals, one of which was appropriated in FY 2000. No emergency funds have been requested for FY 2001 at this time.

Verification and Validation: Procedures relating to verification and validation of reported data on all measures are described on page 25.

Data on systems installed, which are intermediate outcomes, are used as indicators of success in protecting water quality because accurate and consistent data can be obtained. Data on reduced pollutant loading resulting from the systems would be a more desirable measure. However, experience in water quality projects in the early 1990's indicated that collecting reliable data on system results from all field offices would require an unreasonable investment in time. Methods to develop scientifically valid estimates of the effects of system application on watershed health are being developed.

Goal 1: A healthy and productive land that sustains food and fiber production, sustains functioning watersheds and natural systems, enhances the environment, and improves urban and rural landscapes.

			FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Estimate	FY 2001 Estimate
Other Resource Concerns	Funding (Discretionary)	($ in 1000s)	121,072	139,439	147,358
	Funding (Mandatory)	($ in 1000s)	0	0	665,000
	Total Funding	($ in 1000s)	121,072	139,439	812,358
	FTEs (Discretionary)		1,252	1,429	1,541
	FTEs (Mandatory)		0	0	1,489
	Total FTEs		1,252	1,427	3,030

"Mandatory" includes program activities reimbursed with Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funds. "Discretionary" includes appropriated funds and reimbursables other than CCC.

PERFORMANCE GOALS AND INDICATORS	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Target	FY 2001 Target
Assist communities to preserve land for agricultural use			
Important agricultural land preserved for agricultural use, 1000s of acres (Farmland Protection Program)	NA	---	130
Assist resource managers to enhance forestland health and productivity			
Forest stand improvement, 1000 acres	*	270	260
Tree and shrub establishment, 1000 acres	*	308	300
Assist farmers to increase soil carbon and reduce emissions of green house gases from their operations			
Provide direct payments and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers for good stewardship (Conservation Security Program)			

* Target was set for a single program (FIP) in FY 1999.

Discussion of Performance Goals: The achievement of the following performance goals will support the achievement of the NRCS mission and USDA's Strategic Goal 3: Promote sensible management of our natural resources.

Agricultural land preservation. The indicator shows acres of important agricultural lands that are preserved in agricultural use through transfer of development rights or other state or local initiatives on land where NRCS assistance has been provided through the Farmland Protection Program. The program-specific measure for FPP is included because the President's budget proposes to expand FPP in FY 2001. No funds

were provided for FPP in FY 1999, but some land was placed under easement as a result of prior year activities; data for those accomplishments are not yet available. The total funding for FY 2000 is $250,000. Data NRCS provides other technical assistance and natural resource information, such as soil survey data and interpretations, to state and local governments to help support their farmland preservation programs

Forest improvement. A long-term performance target for assistance to forestland was not established in the NRCS strategic plan for FY 1997-2002, because our role in forestland conservation is not as large as our role in conservation of land in other uses. However, in five of the six NRCS regions, customers identified forestland as a priority concern, and forestland goals are included in the regional strategic plans. The indicators apply to the Forestry Incentives Program, other NRCS programs, State and local partners' programs, and FSA's Conservation Reserve Program.

Global climate change. In FY 2001, NRCS will undertake activities in support of the President's initiative on global climate change. In the short term, progress on the following actions will be used as indicators of effective and efficient use of the funds expended:

- Measurement of baseline soil biomass carbon on a distributed geographic frame representative of major landuse and management systems under various soil and climate conditions.
- Development of a “use-dependent” soil carbon database based on the baseline carbon measurements and linkage of the carbon database to the national soils information system (NASIS).
- Explore the efficiency of field-based sampling techniques(including the National Resources Inventory) for collecting baseline carbon levels and changes in carbon in response to landuse and management.
- Pilot test of various financial assistance/incentive approaches to encourage adoption of conservation plans that add carbon sequestration to traditional erosion control and water quality objectives and assess their relative effectiveness.

As these measurement and incentive systems are developed and applied, performance on the outcome, the sequestration of soil organic carbon, can be measured and verified with reasonable levels of certainty.

Conservation Security Program. Measures will be established to report the number of family farmers and ranchers the program assists to stay in business during downturns in market or when impacted by weather cycles. Methods will be established to quantify the effects of the program in maintaining practices and leading to the adoption of new conservation practices.

Means and Strategies: The means and strategies that support all NRCS program activities and goals are described on page 22.

The strategy for maintaining a productive land includes preserving prime and unique farmland in agricultural use. In FY 2001, the strategy includes an increase of $65,000,000 and 104 staff years for the Farmland Protection Program to establish partnerships with state, tribal, and local governmental entities to acquire easements or other interests in land with prime, unique, or other productive soil. The strategy includes a slight increase in the proportion of program funds used for technical assistance for the program. The change in the financial-assistance-to-technical-assistance ratio will enable NRCS to administer the program more effectively, especially in terms of continuing the partnerships and of monitoring, managing, and enforcing the conservation easements acquired under the program.

The new resources required to implement the President’s initiative on global climate change include $15,000,000 and 148 staff years to help farmers verifiably increase their soil carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from their operations. Of the funds, $12,000,000 will be used to expand soil carbon studies to support the U.S. Global Change Research Program. The funds will be used to establish baseline soil carbon levels, test planning tools to connect conservation systems to enhanced carbon sequestration rates (planning tool being developed by ARS), establish a national inventory of soil carbon (sensitive to land management activities), and pilot test incentive options to encourage adoption of enhanced conservation plans. In addition, $3,000,000 will be used to carry out research pilot projects on animal feeding operations and livestock management issues and cropland management as part of the Climate Change Technology Initiative. Resources required include an increase of $5,000,000 and 11 staff years in CTA to support

implementation of Executive Order 13134 "Developing and Promoting Biobased Products and Bioenergy" (see following description under Goal 2).

The Administration's strategy for maintaining a productive land includes a major initiative to strengthen ongoing conservation efforts by helping farmers and ranchers who have been hurt by the downturn in the farm economy. This initiative, the Conservation Security Program, will encourage farmers to continue or increase current levels of conservation and will bring new participants into the conservation effort. Resources to implement this new strategy include $510,000,000 in financial assistance and $90,000,000 in technical assistance.

Verification and Validation: Verification and validation of reported data are described on page 25.

Goal 2: Individuals and their neighbors working together as effective and willing stewards of the natural resources on their property and in their communities.

Objective: 2.1. A strong and effective grassroots conservation partnership across the United States and its territories, commonwealths, and affiliated governments.

Program Activities: See Table 7 on page 7.

Funds and FTEs: Costs of achieving this goal are included within the totals for the natural resources objectives of Goal 1 - A Healthy and Productive Land. Only the additional funds and staff years requested to support new initiatives to strengthen the grassroots partnership are described below.

PERFORMANCE GOALS AND MEASURES	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Target	FY 2001 Target
Assist people living in communities to describe the conditions of the land and develop plans to address their resource concerns.			
Group and area-wide plans developed	NA*	2,500	2,500

* Target was set for a single program (EQIP) in FY 1999.

Discussion of Performance Goals: The achievement of the performance goal will support the achievement of USDA's Strategic Goal 3: Promote sensible management of our natural resources. It also supports USDA Strategic Objective 1.3, to enhance the ability of rural communities to develop, grow, and invest in projects to expand economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for farm and rural residents.

The indicator *Group and area-plans developed* applies to all NRCS programs. This replaces the similar measure (locally-led action plans developed) that applied only to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program in the FY 1999 performance plan. Preliminary data to set a tentative goal for all programs were not available until 1999. The indicator and goals will be further refined and adjusted when additional data are available through the new reporting system.

Means and Strategies: The primary local entities who are NRCS's partners in resource conservation are described on page 24 in the paragraphs on cooperative activities and leveraging. The following paragraphs describe new initiatives to increase local capability for providing leadership to local communities and initiating local action to address local problems.

Local conservation districts are established under state law to develop and implement local conservation plans. NRCS assists the local entities to develop the capacity to carry out the responsibilities assigned to them in state law. A key USDA strategy for strengthening conservation districts' capability, established in the 1996 Farm Bill, is to provide USDA cost shares through EQIP to priority areas and concerns identified by

local work groups chaired by the conservation districts. Prior to passage of the 1996 Act, USDA provided cost shares to individual producers without explicitly coordinating that assistance with the priorities of the local districts or other community groups.

USDA provides assistance to communities to help make better use of natural resources. In FY 2001, USDA will direct $5,000,000 and 11 staff years in CTA funds to a new activity to help communities plan, develop, and implement conservation-based biomass production systems. Of these funds, $11,000,000 will be used to provide training, develop practice standards, and hire experts in biomass production technology to train existing staff and to direct technical assistance to producers and communities implementing biomass projects. The other $4,000,000 will provide competitive start-up grants for the projects.

In FY 2001, resources required include an increase of $5,000,000 and 22 staff years in CTA to implement Community/Federal Information Partnerships in support of the Administration's Livability Initiative. The funds will help make geospatial data available for use by governments, businesses, academic institutions, and individuals. NRCS would enter into agreements with state and county governments to develop geospatial layers and to establish Internet webservers in compliance with standards established by the Federal Geographic Data Committee.

In FY 2001, NRCS will redirect $2,000,000 in Watershed Surveys and Planning funds to provide technical assistance to communities for disaster mitigation planning. In addition, $3,000,000 of Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations funds will be redirected to provide technical and financial assistance to communities to implement disaster mitigation plans.

In FY 2001, the strategy includes a proposal for competitive partnership grants to enhance the technical capacity of locally-based organizations, including soil and water conservation districts, RC&D councils, watershed councils, and others. In increase of $10,000,000 in CTA funds would be used to provide coordination of locally initiated conservation efforts and direct technical assistance to private landowners. The funds would result in the development of watershed partnerships that included all stakeholders and led to the implementation of actions plans to address locally-identified resource needs.

Verification and Validation: Verification and validation of reported data are described on page 25.

Management Initiative 1: Provide high quality customer service

Program Activities: See Table 7 on page 7.

Funds and FTEs: Costs of achieving this goal are included within the totals for the natural resources objectives of Goal 1 - A Healthy and Productive Land. Only the costs of new initiatives to improve assistance to traditionally underserved customer groups are described below.

PERFORMANCE GOALS AND MEASURES	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Target	FY 2001 Target
Treat all customers fairly and equitably			
Minority clients receiving assistance, number	54,800	70,000	77,000
Provide high quality service tailored to customers' needs			
Customer satisfaction (service quality), percentage	92	93	93
Customers receiving planning and application assistance, number	630,600	581,400	636,800
Customers receiving inventory and evaluation assistance, number	NA	NE	215,000

Customers receiving education and information assistance, number	397,000	366,000	400,900

NA = Not available NE = No target established

Discussion of Performance Goals: The achievement of these performance goals supports achievement of USDA Management Initiative "Provide Effective Customer Service and Efficient Program Delivery," subgoal "Ensure that all customers and employees are treated fairly and equitably, with dignity and respect."

Table 8 on page 21 shows the types of customers who receive services from each NRCS program.

The values shown for the indicator *number of minority clients receiving assistance* include all members of minority racial and ethnic groups. They do not include white females. Use of an associated indicator for parity in services provided, which was included in the FY 1999 plan, has been suspended pending resolution of concerns about the population data to be used as the baseline for comparison. An indicator for number of tribes assisted, proposed in the FY 1999 plan, has also been suspended pending expansion of the reporting system to support capture of appropriate data.

The *customer satisfaction* reported for FY 1999 is based on the interagency survey of the seamless service provided through the USDA Service Centers.

Customers receiving services. The measures of number of customers served include all customer types benefiting from resource assistance. Customer types included are persons, corporations, groups, and organizations. The measure c*ustomers receiving planning and application assistance* refers to people who receive assistance in planning the management of natural resources on a specific operating unit or geographic area. The customer numbers reported through the new Performance and Results Measurement System may differ from the number reported through the previous reporting system and from the goals for FY 1999 and FY 2000, which were set on the basis of the older data. *Customers receiving inventory and evaluation assistance* means customers who receive assistance that helps them understand a resource issue and provides an evaluation of possible actions to address a concern. It does not include determinations of eligibility for specific programs or compliance with specific programs. *Customers receiving education and information assistance* is redefined in the new reporting system; the data may not be consistent with targets set under the older definition.

Means and Strategies: NRCS strategy for ensuring that every customer is treated fairly and with dignity and respect is based on implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary's Civil Rights Action Team and National Commission on Small Farms. NRCS created an Outreach Division within National Headquarters to provide leadership and ensure accountability for outreach to traditionally underserved groups. We have appointed a coordinator to ensure that the research and education assistance needs of socially disadvantaged customer groups are given priority and a coordinator for environmental justice to ensure implementation of the Executive Order on environmental justice.

NRCS coordinates with Rural Development and the Farm Service Agency to provide training so that all employees understand their responsibilities in civil rights in program delivery. NRCS also encourages conservation district employees to participate in civil rights training and ensures that all members of the conservation partnership comply with civil rights policies for Federally-assisted programs.

In FY 2001, NRCS will designate part of the increased EQIP funds to accelerating assistance to American Indians and Alaska Natives. A total of $16,000,000 of EQIP funds will be designated for priority environmental issues on tribal lands.

Verification and Validation: Verification and validation of reported data are described on page 25.

Table 8 Customers Served by Natural Resource Conservation Service Programs

	Programs										
	Conservation Operations	Watershed Surveys & Planning	Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations[1]	Forestry Incentives Program	Resource Conservation & Development	Conservation Reserve Program	Wetlands Reserve Program	Environmental Quality Incentives Program	Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	Conservation Farm Option Program	Farmland Protection Program
Customers Served	TA	TA/FA	TA/FA	TA/FA	TA/FA	TA	FA/TA	FA/TA/EA	FA/TA	FA/TA	FA/TA
Farmers, Ranchers and other Landowners (4.7 million people/ 907 million acres)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Woodlot Owners (9.9 million people/ 353 million acres)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Communities (45,000 cities and towns/ 80% US pop)	X	X	X		X		X	X	X		X
Soil and Water Conservation Districts (3,500 nationally)	X	X	X		X					X	
Resource Conservation & Development Councils (315 nationally, approx. 75% US counties)	X				X						
States and Trust Territories	X	(X)	(X)		(X)		X				X
Federal Lands, Other Federal Agencies	(X)	(X)	(X)		(X)						
Tribal Governments/Alaska Native Corporations (557 Federally recognized Tribes) (100 million acres including Alaska Native lands)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Foreign Governments	(X)		(X)								

[1]Includes Emergency Watersheds Protection Program

X= definitely
(X) = limited in nature

TA = Technical assistance
FA = Financial assistance

Management Initiative 2: Improve quality and usefulness of NRCS information

Program Activities: See Table 7 on page 7.

Funds and FTEs: Costs of achieving this goal are included within the totals for the natural resources objectives of Goal 1 - A Healthy and Productive Land. Sources for funding to collect, manage, and disseminate data on natural resources condition and to develop conservation technology are the activities within the Conservation Operations account and the Watershed Surveys and Planning account.

PERFORMANCE GOALS AND MEASURES	FY 1998 Actual	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Target	FY 2001 Target
Make available current soils data in a form that can be used as the foundation for integrated resources assessments for areas that range in scale from a single farm to the Nation				
Non-Federal lands with soil survey available in digital form, number of surveys	274	366	180	320
Customers accessing or downloading soils data -- total number of STATSGO and SSURGO downloads or CD orders	2,611	2,611	3,000	3,000
Provide accurate and timely information on water supply for western water resources managers				
Water supply forecasts issued, number	6,195	6,835	6,470	6,550
Water users and managers utilizing information developed by the snow survey and water supply forecasting program, number of homepage accesses	8,000	43,800	58,300	85,000
Water users fully satisfied with usefulness of snow survey and water supply forecasting program information, percent	98	98	98	98
Develop and transfer plant science technology to help solve natural resource problems				
New plant releases, number	22	22	16	16
Customers accessing or downloading plant science information (PLANTS database)				
Hits on Web Site, million	9	20	16	16
Website users	300,000	720,000	800,000	800,000

Discussion of Performance Goals: The achievement of these performance goals supports achievement of USDA's Strategic Goal 3: Promote sensible management of our natural resources. It also supports USDA Strategic Objective 1.3, to enhance the ability of rural communities to develop, grow, and invest in projects to improve the quality of life for farm and rural residents .

Soil survey areas with soil survey available in digital form means that the completed soil survey has been digitized to quality standards required in the National Cooperative Soil Survey and stored in a computer database that can be accessed for easy use. (See also page 23 for the role of soil digitization in the USDA Service Center Initiative.)

Snow survey and water forecasting measures. The information generated and disseminated by the Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program is critical to water managers who manage the major reservoir systems that supply water to residential, municipal, and industrial needs in the West, as well as to agricultural

producers. The goals for FY 1999, FY 2000, and FY 2001 include customers accessing the data electronically.

The number of *customers accessing or downloading natural resource data* and information is an indicator of the utility of those data and information to our customers. It indicates progress in increasing the amount, kind, and quality of data and information provided to customers. This indicator does not measure all NRCS information delivery. It does not account for the much broader provision of data through non-Internet related services. The indicator also does not capture the release of our digital data by non-NRCS entities; in some cases, other organizations have soils data on their data distribution clearinghouse and distribute NRCS data upon demand as well.

STATSGO (State soil survey geographic database) is complete and available on-line and is now in an update/maintenance phase. Increase in usage in FY 1999 will come from increased marketing and increased usage by universities and government agencies. Decrease in usage from FY 1999 to FY 2000 will result as customers become more aware of SSURGO and switch to it. *SSURGO(* Soil survey area geographic database) goals derive from new surveys being completed and from increased marketing. Goals result from estimating 10 data requests per year for each new survey completed and 5 requests per year for surveys completed in previous years.

PLANTS data are also distributed through the International Organization for Plant Information (a global clearinghouse served from Australia), the Integrated Taxonomic Information System (a joint NOAA, NRCS, ARS, EPA, USGS project with Canada and Mexico), an international information cataloging effort called "Species 2000" sponsored by the United Nations and the World Bank, and the Forest Service Information System. The PLANTS database is used by 12 Federal agencies as their standard for vegetation data. It is impossible to estimate the quantity of PLANTS data that is provided to end users through these various data clearinghouse vehicles.

Means and Strategies: The strategy for enhancing the quality and usefulness of NRCS resources inventory data includes increasing cooperative action with other Federal agencies that conduct natural resources inventories. For example, NRCS and the Forest Service will implement an integrated/coordinated Inventory and Monitoring program. The coordinated inventory will provide up-to-date nationally consistent information regarding the abundance, condition, and health of the Nation's natural resources. It will also enhance the efficiencies of both the NRCS National Resources Inventory and Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis program. This integrated approach will incorporate annualized data collection, resource assessment tools, probability-based sampling, and remote sensing technologies. It is expected that the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (DOI-BLM) and other agencies will become partners at the national level. NRCS, Forest Service, and BLM are jointly developing a common rangeland health inventory protocol. NRCS is working with DOI Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies to develop common statistics on the status and trends of wetlands for the Nation. These activities and others not only improve the quality and usefulness of the natural resources data collected, but also reduce the cost by preventing duplication of effort.

Verification and Validation: Verification and validation of reported data are described on page 25.

Means and Strategies for Achieving All NRCS Goals

Maintain the local delivery system -Maintaining the infrastructure to deliver high quality services directly to resource managers is essential to achieving the agency mission and goals. Most NRCS employees provide services directly to customers through 2,535 Service Centers and 315 Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) offices. NRCS employees in the Service Centers provide personalized service to local citizens, helping them to solve or prevent natural resources problems on their land and in their communities. NRCS employees provide information and technical assistance, that is, they work directly with individual land managers to apply that information to the practical problems of land users on an individual farm or ranch. They also assist units of government and communities to assess the resource conditions in the community and set goals for resource protection. The Service Center staff also serves as a clearinghouse for natural

resources information, helping people gain access to knowledge and assistance available from local, state, regional, and national sources. RC&D coordinators provide similar services to local councils representing communities, units of government, and other organizations in an area.

Local NRCS employees are supported by technical teams of specialists in a wide range of disciplines. These specialists service state or multi-state areas and are available to provide specialized technical expertise to help individual land managers and communities solve problems. Their presence ensures that people in all areas have access to the specialized knowledge required to manage natural resources well.

Achieving our strategic objectives for effective stewardship and for a healthy land requires that this effective local delivery system remain in place, and that the field office staffs have the equipment, information, and training needed to continue to function effectively. In FY 2001, necessary resources to maintain an effective delivery infrastructure include an additional $38,000,000 in Conservation Technical Assistance funds to restore the delivery system to near the FY 1999 level. These funds will keep 420 field-based technical assistance staff employed to continue working directly with farmers, ranchers, and other landusers across all States. In addition, in FY 2001, resources required to slow the reduction in the capability of the local delivery system include a total of $1,000,000 to cover the increased costs of pay for the existing staff who assist the local Resources Conservation and Development Councils.

Strengthen the workforce -- Achieving the agency's mission and strategic goals depends on maintaining a highly skilled technical workforce capable of meeting landowner and community requests for conservation assistance. Accelerated training of the field staff and partners is needed to meet the increasing complexity of the conservation challenge and to stay current with rapidly changing science and technologies. This will enable NRCS staff to more efficiently and effectively serve the public.

The agency has set an internal management goal of ensuring that field employees who deliver conservation assistance to landowners and communities receive 2 weeks of training in conservation planning and resource assessment each year. Employees will be trained in a variety of areas including, but not limited to: conservation planning, resource assessment, civil rights and outreach, conservation technology and information transfer, conflict resolution, public participation, effective facilitation, coalition building, team building, and customer service. An evaluation method will be used to ensure that employees are able to perform as intended after training has been provided. The agency will identify appropriate and cost-effective training delivery systems. Training methods may include: on-the-job training, workshops, field demonstrations, distance learning, interactive computer training, video and handbook modules, formal classroom courses, and self-development.

The agency is implementing the recommendations of the Secretary's Civil Rights Action Team to ensure that the workforce reflects the diversity of our customer base and that all employees are treated fairly and with dignity and respect. Managers and employees receive appropriate training. Managers' performance appraisals include civil rights responsibilities.

Increase efficiency through streamlining of administrative functions (information technology, human resources, financial management, civil rights, and management services) **--** A primary USDA strategy for maintaining an adequate field workforce in the face of budget constraints is streamlining administrative processes.

Increase use of networked communications, data sharing and geospatial processing tools at the field level -- Our ability to achieve the multi-year performance goals for natural resource condition depends upon achieving the long-range goal of having all NRCS offices linked by a fully networked system for communication and data transfer. This system will be a common system for the USDA Service Centers, providing a means for streamlining program administration and information management for FSA and the Rural Development mission area as well as NRCS.

NRCS has developed a vision for the future of information technology at the field level and is participating in the departmental initiative on creation of a common computing environment for Service Center agencies. By the end of FY 2000, all offices will have basic mobile computing capability.

The critical element for achieving the benefits anticipated from the common computing environment and reengineering of Service Center business practices is the Service Center Geographic Information Strategy (GIS) Strategy. To fully implement GIS technology in Service Centers by the year 2003, NRCS will:

- Accelerate the digitization of soil surveys and watershed boundaries.
- Continue sharing the cost of developing digital orthophotography and climate data.
- Initiate a program for geospatial tracking of wetland easements and other program-related easements.
- Share the cost of an interagency land cover/plants database.

Improve financial management and reporting. -- NRCS supports USDA Management Initiative 4 - Improve financial management and reporting and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer's (OCFO) performance goals as follows: Reliable cost accounting information available: NRCS has implemented an accountability system that includes partial cost accounting processes. The goal is to interface the remaining cost information to complete the accounting process that will determine the full cost of programs. Data on costs of all programs (CTA, EQIP, etc.) and for major activities (planning, application, resources inventory, etc.) were collected in FY 1999. The system for time and cost accounting will be linked to the other agency systems that provide data on program activities and performance. Correct internal control deficiencies timely: Currently there is one OIG audit on which final action was not completed within one year of the management decision. The audit liaison is working closely with appropriate NRCS personnel and the OCFO's Planning and Accountability Division to close this audit. Implement Debt Collection Improvement Act: The Debt Collection Improvement Act was implemented in NRCS. Currently, delinquent debts are referred to the National Finance Center, which in turn refers them to Treasury for administrative offset. Debts owed to NRCS are very few and are not considered material when compared to agency assets and to other agencies. Implement integrated financial management system in USDA: Implementation of FFIS in NRCS will require modifications in MIDAS to interface into FFIS to comply with the Department's vision of one integrated financial management information system by October 1, 2000. Clean and timely audit opinion on audited financial statements: The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is auditing NRCS data at the National Finance Center centralized accounting system. Upon completion of the audit, the OIG will describe audit findings in a management report to NRCS and the OCFO. Drug free workplace: NRCS ensures that activities are in compliance with the drug free workplace program.

Increase cooperative activities and leveraging -- Conservation of private land is a partnership effort that relies on many individuals, groups, and governmental entities working together to achieve common goals. The foundation of the partnership is the traditional partnership between NRCS, state conservation agencies, and local conservation districts. NRCS provides assistance to individual land managers through the local districts. Conservation districts are units of state or tribal government that are responsible for setting priorities and developing conservation programs for their area. They are operated by boards of locally elected officials who serve without salary. District employees administer local and state conservation programs and cooperate with NRCS specialists in administering Federal programs in the district. The primary conservation work force includes nearly 12,000 NRCS employees and 8,000 district or state agency staff. In some field offices, state and local employees outnumber NRCS staff. NRCS and state and local employees in a field office work as a team, using the same case files and technical tools to serve the local community.

NRCS also works closely with local Resource Conservation and Development Councils, which are composed of volunteers representing many units of government and civic organizations within an area. The council serves as a catalyst for drawing together resources from the private sector, corporations, and all levels of government to solve problems in the area. In addition, NRCS works with tribal governments, with other Federal agencies, and with many non-governmental organizations that have a stake in resource use and protection.

Achieving the goals set in the NRCS strategic plan depends on the continuing cooperation and assistance of these state and local partners. It also depends on the agency and partners success in doubling other Federal, state, local, and nongovernmental contributions to conservation leveraged through NRCS programs.

Verification and Validation for All Strategic Goals and Management Initiatives

In FY 1999, NRCS implemented a new accountability system that will provide a balanced, reliable, and timely picture of the agency's performance. The system makes use of site-specific information on activities and accomplishments of NRCS front-line employees, information from the agency's natural resources inventories and the National Cooperative Soil Survey, and information collected by other Federal, state, and other entities. It will also include information about the quality of our services collected through a system of customer and stakeholder surveys. The performance data collected through the system will enable agency managers to estimate the effect of programs on the condition of natural resources systems, assess the cost-effectiveness of service delivery, identify opportunities for process improvement, and respond to customers' needs with strategies and assistance tailored to local conditions.

Data collection. Components of the system include:

- *Detailed data on how we spend our time*. The Time and Attendance Report each employee submits every 2 weeks reports the hours spent for each of 27 programs or initiatives (Watershed Surveys and Planning, Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, etc.) and for each of nine major activities (providing assistance in developing conservation plans, conducting resource inventories, etc.) The T&A tool used to report these data is the system developed by the National Agricultural Statistics Service. It is a user-friendly automated tool that enables each employee to record time and activities directly and includes built-in edit checks to minimize keying errors. Supervisors review T&As before they are submitted to ensure that data entered accurately reflect how the employee's time is spent. The initial data will be monitored to identify additional edit checks that can be added to the system.
- *Data on the workload in each field office area*. We have developed a process for workload analysis at the field level that will provide a rational basis for developing strategies and allocating staff time and funds. The analysis identified the major products and services that are delivered at the field level as discrete, mutually exclusive units and further identified the tasks required to deliver each product or service. The analysis then divided the nation into geographic resource areas with resource conditions and agricultural enterprises similar enough to permit description of typical activities. Detailed estimates of time needed to execute each task were developed, by resource area, for each technical discipline needed to carryout the task. The analysis is a partnership activity conducted by NRCS, conservation districts, state conservation agencies, and resource conservation and development councils. It identifies tasks and resources of each member of the partnership. It is conducted according to consistent methodology nationally. The methodology includes procedures for quality control to assure consistency in the estimates. In future years, data from the Time and Attendance reports will be available to help verify estimated time data for key core work products. A workload analysis for FY 2000 was completed in June 1999 and an analysis for FY 2001 is planned for early FY 2000.
- *Complete and consistent data on key performance measures*. We have identified key measures that are appropriate indicators of annual progress toward strategic goals. These indicators are conservation practices and systems that are defined in NRCS field office technical guides. Field offices will report their accomplishments for each measure on at least a bi-weekly basis. The reporting system is a user-friendly, Web-based interface that will minimize the time required for data entry in the field. Business rules have been developed and will be integrated into the new system to provide a first level data validation function. Additional data validation/verification plans are being developed to ensure data are nationally consistent and comparable. Basic demographic data necessary to ensure programs are delivered fairly and equitably will be reported for all services delivered.

  In addition to the conservation practices and systems, which are indicators of outcomes, the new system will report other data needed to manage activities. Among these data are data on 1) selected output and input indicators, including program management items (such as number and acres in contracts, etc.), 2) resource inventory and technology development, and 3) other NRCS state and national office outputs. Data about customer satisfaction will be collected through surveys.

  The performance reporting system is being developed and implemented in phases. The first phase, essentially completed at the end of FY 1998, permits collection of data on performance measures that are easily quantifiable activities, such as acres of erosion control practices applied. Performance measures focused on end outcomes, which are still in draft form, will describe the environmental, economic, and social/cultural effects that result from NRCS programs and activities. A focused effort in inventory,

assessment, science, and technology has been initiated to address outcomes more thoroughly over the next year. As this effort identifies outcome measures that would be feasible and useful on an annual basis, such measures will be tested and used to complement the measures now in the system.

Fiscal year 1999 is a transition year for the PRMS. Beginning in October 1998, a sample of field offices began entering data. The sample is sufficient to provide reliable reports at the national level. All offices, with the exception of those experiencing significant telecommunications access problems, were entering data by the beginning of the third quarter. These "hardship" offices will be coming on-line with PRMS data entry later during 1999 and early 2000 as the Department's LAN/WAN/Voice initiative completes the transition of all field level offices to frame relay service for Internet access. State offices will also begin entering data in October 1999. Efforts are underway to integrate existing databases into the new system. An effort is underway to accommodate local interests of conservation districts, states, and other partners into the system. Throughout this transition year, PRMS will be evaluated and needed adjustments made.

- *Data on resource condition collected by resources inventories.* Statistically valid inventories are an essential part of strategic planning. Inventories, which collect data on a sample that represents the whole landscape, are necessary to determine the direction and degree of change in conditions. The data on annual measures collected by the performance and results measurement system cannot be used to determine whether overall resource condition is improving or deteriorating. The National Resources Inventory conducted by NRCS is the major inventory of the status, condition, and trends of soil, water, and related resources on the Nation's nonfederal lands. In addition to the NRI and other NRCS data, we will make use of data compiled by other agencies' inventories and utilize performance indicators identified by them when appropriate. USDA agencies that collect data NRCS uses include: Forest Service, Agricultural Research Service, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, Economic Research Service, National Agricultural Statistics Service, and Farm Service Agency. Other Federal agencies provide valuable information for validation of NRCS data. These agencies include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Interior Department's U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Data that NRCS relies on other agencies to provide is from major inventories collected according to well-defined protocols and with internal quality assurance procedures. Differences in definitions or procedures between other agency's inventory data and NRCS data are identified and their implications for use of the data noted.

Quality Assurance. The Agency's new performance measurement system, PRMS, was designed to ensure the data would be collected accurately and consistently nationwide. The internal controls to address data quality issues are either in place or being implemented during FY 1999. The internal controls include:

- Data definitions and selection of clearly defined performance measures. The process of identifying the key agency performance measures was focused on ensuring that performance measures were understood by all employees and that items collected were directly linked to existing activities. As an example, the data entered in PRMS are a subset of items already reported in client case files. The new system required almost no new definitions for employees to learn, but rather references existing definitions in the agency's Field Office Technical Guide, Natural Resources Planning Manual, Engineering Field Manual and other technical and program policy directives.
- On-line definitions and help screens for all performance data collection items. As part of the PRMS Web site, specific definitions are available on-line for each reportable item. The system also contains an on-line feature that allows employees to type in specific questions relating to items reported or definitions if they are unclear.
- Telephone hotline. NRCS implemented a telephone hotline that employees can call if they have any problems entering performance data. If the questions are related to a business definition, they are routed to appropriate performance data stewards to ensure consistent interpretation.
- PRMS Data Quality Assurance Plan. A detailed data quality assurance plan is being finalized which outlines specific responsibilities associated with quality control of all agency performance data. PRMS Coordinator positions exist in all states and the six regions to ensure data quality will be monitored on a continuous basis.
- Built in data tools to ensure data quality. There are two types of tools that exist to help ensure data quality is closely monitored. The first are automated tools built into the software which operate either at the time of data entry, to prevent incorrect entries, or which perform data validations checks after the data is entered. An example of the former is a check to verify that as a progress item is linked to a county and

a watershed, that the combination entered is geographically possible. An example of the latter is a post-session check to verify that the data entered does not contain illogical attributes. Both of these checks operate through a Quality Gate server that prevents the inaccurate data from ever getting posted in the PRMS database. The second type of automated tool built into the software is a manual review capability for use by PRMS Coordinators at the state, regional, and national level. Coordinators who will review the data quality on a regular basis can identify progress items that appear to be in error. A feature exists in the software that allows them to "tag" the questionable item, and it is removed from the national PRMS database, and re-submitted to the actual person who entered the item the next time that person enters PRMS. The employee then fixes the problem and resubmits it to the system. This entire process is fully automated.

- Individual employee accountability for individual data entry. PRMS requires that all employees enter performance data through an individual login. This allows the system to track every system progress item to an individual, as previously described.
- National consistency checks with correlated data. As part of NRCS's accountability system, data is also collected on workload, time spent, goals, and other information. The data definitions across all these systems were coordinated during late 1999 to allow data to be integrated as well as, support data quality assurance. This task will be performed by the Operations Management and Oversight Division, as well as the Strategic and Performance Planning Division.
- Oversight and evaluation (O&E) surveys and reviews. PRMS and the other components of the accountability system will undergo reviews and evaluations to identify problem areas or areas that may be reducing the overall data quality. The first such survey was initiated in late 1999 to look at key PRMS data issues during the transition year. A more extensive O&E survey is planned for FY 2000 after the system is fully operational.
- On-going state quality assurance activities. In addition to the above, Quality Assurance Reviews are conducted annually at selected field offices. Program and functional appraisals are also carried out. Performance data will be reviewed as part of each of these efforts.

Most of the quality control processes described above are completed and institutionalized. Some are mid-implementation as part of the agency's transition to its new performance measurement system. The initial O&E survey of the accountability system has not been finalized. The Data Quality Assurance Plan will be available in October 1999 as the system becomes operational nationwide.

Table 9- Summary Of NRCS Resources For FY 2000

Goal 1 -- Healthy and Productive Land [1]

		Cropland	Grazing Land	Watersheds	Wetlands	Wildlife	Other[2]	TOTAL
Conservation Technical Assistance[3]	$ in 1000s	302,311	71,682	128,799	15,557	38,902	95,135	652,388
	FTEs	3,597	799	1,390	165	400	1,057	7,409
Soil Survey	$ in 1000s	30,826	11,449	17,615	13,211	1,761	13,211	88,073
	FTEs	360	134	206	154	21	154	1,028
Snow Survey & Water Supply Forecasting	$ in 1000s	1,778	410	3,352	684	205	410	6,840
	FTEs	15	3	28	6	2	3	57
Plant Materials	$ in 1000s	2,072	3,921	1,512	1,120	2,352	224	11,202
	FTEs	23	44	17	13	26	3	126
Watershed Surveys and Planning	$ in 1000s			11,368				11,368
	FTEs			123				123
Emergency Watershed Protection	$ in 1000s			90,000				90,000
	FTEs			355				355
Watershed & Flood Prevention	$ in 1000s			180,541				180,541
Operations	FTEs			603				603
Resources Conservation & Development[4]	$ in 1000s	5,570	3,342	5,199	2,600	743	19,682	37,136
	FTEs	59	36	55	28	8	210	396
Forestry Incentives Program	$ in 1000s						10,526	10,526
	FTEs						0	0
Wetlands Reserve Program	$ in 1000s				159,654			159,654
	FTEs				245			245
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	$ in 1000s	34,800	43,500	87,000	8,700	0	0	174,000
	FTEs	121	151	302	30	0	0	604
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	$ in 1000s					0		0
	FTEs					0		0
Farmland Protection Program	$ in 1000s						250	250
	FTEs						0	0
Trust Funds	$ in 1000s			1,342				1,342
	FTEs			1				1
Total	$ in 1000s	377,358	134,305	526,728	201,526	43,964	139,439	1,423,320
	FTEs	4,176	1,167	3,080	641	457	1,427	10,947

Notes to Table 9

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[1] Funds and FTEs for objectives supporting General Goal 2- Effective Stewardship are included in the funds allocated among natural resources objectives.

[2] The "Other" column includes assistance on forestland and in urban and suburban areas, community development activities, and air quality/ global change activities.

[3] For Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA), the cropland FTEs shown include 626 FTEs funded by reimbursement from the Conservation Reserve Program. An additional 547 FTEs will also be required to support the CRP workload associated with FSA's projected sign-up in FY 2000.

In addition to the CCC reimbursables, the total FTEs for CTA include 267 funded from non-Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) sources. In this table, staff years funded through CCC are shown with the appropriate program. In the budget tables, staff years funded from CCC are shown as reimbursements to CTA.

[4] For the Resources Conservation and Development Program, the "Other" category includes projects for community improvement, recreation/tourism, economic development, marketing and merchandising, and waste and waste utilization. The "Watersheds" category includes projects for water and water quality, forestry, and other activities.

FTEs include the CTA reimbursements listed above and the following reimbursements to other programs: Soil Surveys 116; Snow Survey 2; Plant Materials 20; Watershed Surveys and Planning 13; Watershed and Flood Prevention 43; RC&D 8

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Conservation systems and practices produce multiple benefits; activities taken to address one resource concern affect others as well. Funds and FTEs have been estimated based on the primary purpose of an activity. No attempt has been made to allocate costs to account for the multiple benefits they produce. Therefore, estimates do not show the full costs of achieving an objective.

Table 10. - Summary Of NRCS Resources For FY 2001

Goal 1 -- Healthy and Productive Land [1]

		Cropland	Grazing Land	Watersheds	Wetlands	Wildlife	Other[2]	TOTAL
Conservation Technical Assistance[3]	$ in 1000s	299,014	68,070	212,098	13,602	35,689	113,823	742,297
	FTEs	3,737	769	1,945	154	404	1,185	8,194
Soil Survey	$ in 1000s	30,353	11,274	17,345	13,008	1,734	13,008	86,723
	FTEs	341	127	195	146	20	146	975
Snow Survey & Water Supply Forecasting	$ in 1000s	1,713	395	3,229	659	198	395	6,590
	FTEs	14	3	27	6	2	3	55
Plant Materials	$ in 1000s	2,058	3,894	1,502	1,113	2,336	223	11,125
	FTEs	23	43	17	12	26	2	123
Watershed Surveys and Planning	$ in 1000s			11,368				11,368
	FTEs			118				118
Watershed and Flood Prevention	$ in 1000s			108,423				108,423
Operations	FTEs			543				543
Resources Conservation & Development[4]	$ in 1000s	5,635	3,381	5,259	2,630	751	19,909	37,565
	FTEs	58	35	54	27	8	204	385
Forestry Incentives Program	$ in 1000s							0
	FTEs							0
Wetlands Reserve Program	$ in 1000s				286,000			286,000
	FTEs				375			375
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	$ in 1000s	41,400	51,750	211,000	10,350	10,500	0	325,000
	FTEs	137	171	699	34	35	0	1,076
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	$ in 1000s					50,000		50,000
	FTEs					111		111
Farmland Protection Program	$ in 1000s						65,000	65,000
	FTEs						104	104
Conservation Security Program	$ in 1000s						600,000	600,000
	FTEs						1,385	1,385
Trust Funds	$ in 1000s			270				270
	FTEs			1				1
Total	$ in 1000s	380,174	138,764	570,493	327,362	101,209	812,358	2,330,361
	FTEs	4,310	1,148	3,598	754	604	3,030	13,444

Notes to Table 10

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[1] Funds and FTEs for objectives supporting General Goal 2- Effective Stewardship are included in the funds allocated among natural resources objectives.

[2] The “Other” column includes assistance on forestland and in urban and suburban areas, community development activities, and air quality/ global change activities.

[3] For Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA), the amounts shown in the cropland box include $33 million and 626 FTEs funded by reimbursement for the Conservation Reserve Program. The table does not include the additional 630 FTEs that will also be required to support the CRP workload associated with FSA's projected sign-up in FY 2000.

In addition to the CCC reimbursables, the total FTEs for CTA include 267 funded from non-Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) sources. In this table, staff years funded through CCC are shown with the appropriate program. In the budget tables, staff years funded from CCC are shown as reimbursements to CTA.

[4] For the Resources Conservation and Development Program, the “Other” category includes projects for community improvement, recreation/tourism, economic development, marketing and merchandising, and waste and waste utilization. The “Watersheds” category includes projects for water and water quality, forestry, and other activities.

FTEs include the CTA reimbursements listed above and the following reimbursements to other programs: Soil Surveys 116; Snow Survey 2; Plant Materials 20; Watershed Surveys and Planning 13; Watershed and Flood Prevention 50; RC&D 8.

The FTEs shown for the WRP do not include 24 FTEs that are not funded.

Conservation systems and practices produce multiple benefits; activities taken to address one resource concern affect others as well. Funds and FTEs have been estimated based on the primary purpose of an activity. No attempt has been made to allocate costs to account for the multiple benefits they produce. Therefore, estimates do not show the full costs of achieving an objective.

Revision of Strategic Plan for FY 1997-2002

As permitted under GPRA, NRCS updated its strategic plan as part of the FY 2000 performance planning process. The following table lists goals and objectives as shown in the FY 1999 plan completed in September 1997 and as updated. The changes shown on the table were made to respond to feedback from the Congress and General Accounting Office and to the final guidance from USDA and OMB.

NRCS Strategic Goals And Objectives As Stated In The Plan Issued Sept. 1997	***Updated Goals And Objectives As Revised In The FY 2000 Performance Planning Process***
Goal 1: Individuals and their neighbors working together as effective and willing stewards of the natural resources on their property and in their communities.	*This is now Goal 2. We have reversed the order of in which the two goals were presented originally in response to comments on the final strategic plans -this order gives priority to the specifically mandated purposes of agency programs- and to be consistent with the major goals of the USDA Strategic Plan for FY 1997-2002.*
Objectives:	
1.1. A strong and effective grassroots conservation partnership across the United States and its territories, commonwealths, and affiliated governments.	*This is now Objective 2.1.*
1.2. A diverse and well-served customer base across the United States and its territories, commonwealths, and affiliated governments.	*This is now Management Initiative 1. This change was made in order to correspond to the format of the USDA Strategic Plan.*
1.3. Private landowners and communities with the science-based information and technologies they need to conserve natural resources.	*This is now Management Initiative 2: Improve Quality and Usefulness of NRCS Information*
Goal 2: A healthy and productive land that sustains food and fiber production, sustains functioning watersheds and natural systems, enhances the environment, and improves urban and rural landscapes.	*This is now Goal 1.*
Objectives	
2.1. Healthy and productive cropland sustaining U.S. agriculture and the environment.	*This is now Objective 1.1.*
2.2. Healthy watersheds providing clean and abundant water supplies for people and the environment.	*This is now Objective 1.2.*
2.3. Healthy and productive grazing land sustaining U.S. agriculture and the environment.	*This is now Objective 1.3.*
2.4. Healthy and productive wetlands sustaining watersheds and wildlife.	*This is now Objective 1.4.*
2.5. High quality habitat on private land supporting the Nation's wildlife heritage.	*This is now Objective 1.5.*

Appendix 1: NRCS Programs

Conservation Operations is authorized by the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1935, P.L. 74-46 (16 U.S.C. 590a-590f) and the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977, (16 U.S.C. 2001-2009). The purpose of the program is to sustain agricultural productivity and protect and enhance the natural resource base. Activities include:

1. **Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA).** The purpose of the program is to assist land users, communities, units of state and local government, and other Federal agencies in planning and implementing conservation systems to reduce erosion, improve soil and water quality, improve and conserve wetlands, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve air quality, improve pasture and range condition, reduce upstream flooding, and improve woodlands.

Objectives of the program are to:

- Assist individual land users, communities, conservation districts, and other units of State and local government and Federal agencies to meet their goals for resource stewardship and assist individuals to comply with State and local requirements. NRCS assistance is provided through conservation districts in accordance with the memorandum of understanding signed by the Secretary of Agriculture, the Governor of the state, and the conservation district. Assistance is provided to land users voluntarily applying conservation and to those who must comply with local or state laws and regulations.
- Assist agricultural producers to comply with the highly erodible land (HEL) and wetland (Swampbuster) provisions of the 1985 Food Security Act, as amended by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (16 U.S.C. 3801 et. seq.) and the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, and wetlands requirements of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. NRCS makes HEL and wetland determinations and helps land users develop and implement conservation plans to comply with the law.
- Provide technical assistance to participants in USDA cost-share and conservation incentive programs. (Assistance is funded on a reimbursable basis from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).
- Collect, analyze, interpret, display, and disseminate information about the condition and trends of the Nation's soil and other natural resources so that people can make good decisions about resource use and about public policies for resource conservation.
- Develop effective science-based technologies for natural resource assessment, management, and conservation.

2. **Soil Surveys**. The purpose of the program is to help people understand soils. Soil surveys provide the public with local information on the capabilities and conservation treatment needs of their soil.

The major objectives of the program are to:

- Provide a basic inventory of soil information for the entire country, produced according to consistent standards and procedures.
- Provide soils information to the public.
- Provide technical services to help people use soils information.

3. **Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasts**. The purpose of the program is to provide western states and Alaska with information on future water supplies.

The objectives of the program are to:

- Provide water users with accurate forecasts of surface water supply within the first 5 working days of each month, January-June.
- Efficiently obtain, manage, and disseminate high quality information on snow, water, climate, and hydrologic conditions.
- Develop and apply new technology to meet changing needs of water users.

4. **Plant Material Centers (PMC)**. The purpose of the program is to provide native plants that can help solve natural resource problems. Beneficial uses for which plant material may be developed include biomass production, carbon sequestration, erosion reduction, wetland restoration, water quality improvement, streambank and riparian area protection, coastal dune stabilization, and other special conservation treatment needs.

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations. Activities under this program include:

Watershed Surveys and Planning authorized by the Watershed and Flood Prevention Act, P.L. 83-566, August 4, 1954, (16 U.S.C. 1001-1008).
Watershed Operations authorized by P.L. 78-534, the Flood Control Act of 1944 (33 U.S.C. 701b-1),
Small Watersheds authorized by P.L. 83-566, as amended, (16 U.S.C. 1001-1008)

The purpose of these programs is to cooperate with state and local agencies, tribal governments, and other Federal agencies to prevent damages caused by erosion, floodwater, and sediment and to further the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water and the conservation and utilization of land.
PL-534 is available only in 11 areas authorized by Congress. The PL-566 program is available nationwide to protect and improve watersheds up to 250,000 acres in size. The objectives of the programs are to assist local sponsors in assessing conditions in their watershed, developing solutions to their problems, and installing necessary measures to alleviate the problems. Resource concerns addressed by the program include water quality, opportunities for water conservation, wetland and water storage capacity, agricultural drought problems, rural development, municipal and industrial water needs, upstream flood damages, and water needs for fish, wildlife, and forest-based industries.

Emergency Operations authorized by Section 216, P.L. 81-516, (33 U.S.C. 701b-1) and Sections 403-405, P.L. 95-334, (16 U.S.C. 2203-2205). The purpose of the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program is to reduce hazards to life and property in watersheds damaged by severe natural events. An emergency is considered to exist when a watershed is suddenly impaired by flood, fire, drought, or other natural causes that result in life and property being endangered by flooding, erosion, or sediment discharge. The emergency area need not be declared a national disaster area to be eligible for assistance. Objectives of the program are to provide technical and financial assistance for disaster cleanup and subsequent rebuilding; stream corridor, wetland and riparian area restoration to pre-storm conditions; and for urban planning and site location assistance to the Federal Emergency Management Agency when relocating communities out of floodplains.

Forestry Incentives Program (FIP). This program is authorized under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-313), as amended by Title XII of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-624) (FACTA), as amended by the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (the 1996 Act). The purpose of the program is to increase production of sawtimber and pulpwood on nonindustrial private forest lands; to decrease, over time, expected shortages and rising prices of timber; and to help ensure effective use of available forest lands. The objective of the program is to provide cost-share and technical assistance to landowners to encourage voluntary installation of forestry practices.

Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D). This program is authorized by Section 102 of the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962 (P.L. 87-703), (7 U.S.C. 1010-1011) and Sections 1528-1538 of the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 (P.L. 97-98). The 1996 Act extended the program through the year 2002. The purpose of the program is to improve the capability of state and local units of government and local nonprofit organizations in rural areas to plan, develop, and carry out programs for resource conservation and development. RC&D plans may address land conservation, water management, community development, or other elements including energy conservation, protection of agricultural land, or protection of fish and wildlife habitat.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). This program is authorized under Section 1237 of the Food Security Act of 1985, as added under Title XIV, Section 1438, of FACTA, and amended under the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 and the 1996 Act. The purpose of the program is to preserve, protect, and restore valuable wetlands. The objective is to enroll up to 975,000 acres in permanent easements, 30-year easements, and voluntary restoration agreements by the end of calendar year 2002.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This program was established by the 1996 Act. The purpose of the program is to achieve solutions to local community concerns related to farms, ranches, and rural lands. The objective is to provide technical and financial assistance to resource users who face the most serious threats to soil, water, and related natural resources, assisting them to make changes in cropping systems; grazing management; manure, nutrient, pest, or irrigation management; and land use, or other measures needed to conserve soil, water, and related natural resources.

Farmland Protection Program (FPP). The program is authorized by Section 388 of Title III of the 1996 Act. The purpose of the program is to protect soil by limiting nonagricultural use of prime and unique farmland. The objective is to purchase conservation easements or other interests in not less than 170,000 nor more than 340,000 acres of prime and unique farmland.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). The program is authorized by Section 387 of Title III of the 1996 Act. The purpose of the program is to develop habitat for upland wildlife, wetlands wildlife, threatened and endangered species, fish, and other types of wildlife. Objectives are to provide technical, educational, and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address protection of wetlands, wildlife habitat, and related concerns on their lands.

Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP). The program is authorized by Section 406 of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, P.L. 95-87, as amended by the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Act of 1991, P.L. 101-508. The purpose of the program is to promote the reclamation of abandoned mined areas that are degrading the quality of the environment, preventing or damaging the beneficial use of land and water resources, or endangering the health or safety of the public. The objectives are to assist landowners in preparing conservation and development plans for land stabilization, erosion reduction, and reclamation and to share the cost of installing the planned treatment.

Conservation Security Program (CSP). The President's budget for FY 2001 proposes this new conservation program as a key component of the Administration's Farm Safety Net proposal. The purpose of the program is to strengthen farm family income while promoting environmentally sound natural resource management. The program will provide annual payments to farmers and ranchers who voluntarily implement and maintain various conservation treatments. Payment levels would be based on the range and comprehensiveness of the treatments implemented.

Terminated Programs. The 1996 Act directed that the program functions of two NRCS programs be conducted under authority of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. These programs are the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (CRSC) and the Great Plains Conservation Program (GPCP). NRCS is continuing to provide assistance to program participants who had signed long-term contracts with USDA under these programs